

*logged*

1 February 1963.

Dr. Allen H. Brown  
Department of Botany  
University of Minnesota  
MINNEAPOLIS

Dear Allen,

Joel Orien of the Space Science Board has written Josh Lederberg about the possibility of assisting you in the preparation for the Warsaw exobiology meeting; Josh has passed the letter on to me.

I have had some previous discussions on the possibilities of such a meeting with the Soviet microbiologist, A.A. Imshenetsky, and with D.Y. Martynov, Director of the Shternberg, Astronomical Institute, Moscow. The latter conversation occurred last summer in Liège, where there was a kind of rump session on the Warsaw meeting attended by Van der Hulst, Florkin, Kuiper, Elliott Levinthal and myself. One point, which has emerged rather clearly from what discussion I have had with Soviet scientists, is that some education is needed, especially for the Soviet physical scientists and engineers, on the problems of extraterrestrial life and the possibility of biological contamination. Imshenetsky was quite concerned about biological contamination, especially of Mars, while Martynov tended to dismiss the whole question as something of a joke. He is, of course, not a biologist, but I think his attitude is fairly common in the Soviet Union.

Imshenetsky even mentioned that cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union was probably easier than cooperation between Soviet biologists and physical space scientists. Since scientifically there is no difference which nation performs biological contamination, and since the Soviet Union apparently has the capability for a Mars landing vehicle before the United States, I feel it would be extremely useful to invite several of the relevant Soviet astronomers and other physical space scientists involved in space exploration to the Warsaw meeting, and there to have several papers on the rationale and feasibility of space vehicle sterilization. It would be desirable to schedule a very adequate time for informal discussion. I know that while, for many of us, a general discussion of the possibilities of extraterrestrial life and biological contamination have been heard so frequently that we can repeat them in our sleep, the Soviet astronomers and other physical scientists have not been exposed to such arguments. Incidentally, except

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for Oparin, Imshenatsky and perhaps one or two others, the only scientists in the Soviet Union who have published on the subject of extraterrestrial life have been astronomers, and their relative contribution has not been inconsiderable.

If there is any assistance which I can give you in this matter, of any nature at all, I would be more than happy to do so. Beginning February 4th, my new address will be:

Department of Astronomy,  
Harvard University  
Cambridge 38  
Massachusetts

With best wishes.

Sincerely,

Carl Sagan

CS/ps

Copies to: Dr. R.M. Porter  
Dr. Joel Orlen  
Dr. Hugh Odishaw